

Department of Education

Learners first, connected and inspired



Conducting Home Visits

Procedures



Conducting Home Visits Procedures

1. Scope (audience and applicability)

These procedures ensure the safety of any DoE personnel in conducting home visits and meeting clients and families outside of the school/educational setting and Learning Services structure.

These procedures apply to all DoE personnel conducting home visits or visiting families on non-school/educational setting premises. DoE personnel includes all support staff such as social workers, speech pathologists and school psychologists as well as principals, teachers, Child and Family Centre staff, Aboriginal Education Workers, Officers and Early Years Liaison Officers.

Whilst the majority of home visits occur in pleasant circumstances, DoE Grievance and Investigations Unit recommends joint home visits occur whenever practical due to the possibility that allegations can be made about DoE personnel whilst on a home visit alone.

If an employee is unsure whether a home visit should take place the matter should be discussed with the Principal, senior manager or the relevant senior manager in the Learning Services.

2. Purpose

In order to achieve change and improved learning outcomes for students, it is often necessary to work with or meet family members outside the school environment. This is particularly the case in the early years where Kindergarten teachers, Launching into Learning (LiL) teachers or child and family centre personnel visit families to build relationships, break down barriers, support learning or share information.

For school age children, meetings between families and Department of Education (DoE) personnel usually occur on school premises; however, there are instances when conducting this work and attempting to understand the complexities within some families, that DoE staff conduct home visits. Circumstances which may also necessitate a home visit include occasions whereby a parent or carer cannot be contacted, they are not allowed on school property, the parent or carer is incapacitated or the young person is refusing to attend the school. Other benefits to conducting home visits include, but are not limited to:

- Holistic assessment
- Rapport building
- Parenting and whole family work
- Addressing absenteeism as required under the Education Act 1994
- Observations
- Uniform assistance
- Equitable access to support
- Identify opportunities for referral to other services

While all home and non-school location visits should be respectful and mutually beneficial, the safety of DoE personnel is a priority in all interventions where personnel enter private residences or meet with families on non-school premises.

3. Procedure Details

- Assess available facts in determining whether a home visit will take place and if it is necessary. If unsure, discuss with the principal or senior manager.
 - If possible, an initial meeting with a client or parent should be held in the office or in a neutral community space such as a community health centre, café or school/educational setting.
 - Telephone contact can also be used as initial contact with the parent or carer
 - If transport is the reason parents can't attend a meeting at the school or other DoE facility, consider arranging transport for them.
- The home visit should be planned with the parent or carer.
- Depending on the circumstances of the visit, some useful questions to ask during the discussion **may** include: Are you expecting any visitors? Do you have any pets/dogs? Who will be home when you visit? Other information you deem suitable to visit (i.e. clarifying questions of the house/property, is it an isolated property, can the house be seen from the road etc.)
 - In the event contact cannot be made with the family prior to a home visit (i.e. following up on non attendance), document these attempts and proceed with the home visit with an additional DoE employee, service provider, or Police.
 - Letters can also be sent to parents/carers to inform them of upcoming home visits.
- Check all relevant files and obtain background information. Consult in a confidential and non-judgemental way with colleagues who have had previous contact with the family.
- Be aware of relevant cultural background information and cultural sensitivities i.e. eye contact, shaking hands, touching babies etc.
- Prepare a management plan that includes a risk assessment prior to conducting the visit. This plan should be signed by the principal or senior management and a copy filed.
- School or Department of Education identification must be worn.
- A mobile phone must be taken and kept switched on. Store all relevant emergency contact numbers in the phone – police, principal or senior manager, school, child protection, road side assistance.
 - Be aware of limitations of mobile phone reception.
- Home visits should be conducted during work hours. When leaving the school/education setting or workplace, the principal, a colleague or front office staff should be informed of the destination of the home visit (specific address and name of the family) and the estimated time of return. Let this person know when you have returned.
- This person should make phone contact 30 minutes after an expected return.
- If home visits are conducted during school holidays or after school hours ensure other appropriate personnel (i.e. a colleague or Learning Services personnel) are informed of the home visit.
- If there is a potential risk to employee safety, a home visit should not be conducted.

- In the event of a threat or serious assault on an employee, the principal or senior manager and the General Manager of the Learning Services must be notified. Work with the client and family must cease immediately.
 - Principals and senior managers should ensure the employee receives appropriate support in the form of professional supervision, debriefing or counselling in this instance.
 - If there is any consideration the young person in the home is at risk child protection must be contacted.
- When visiting a home, it is important that personnel remain only in the general living area of the house (kitchen, hall, lounge room).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Secretary and Deputy Secretaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure that the relevant Acts are adhered to • Must ensure that schools are provided with appropriate guidance through the provision of relevant procedures and guidelines
General Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure that principals are familiar with the relevant procedures and guidelines in this area
Principals, CFC Leaders, Senior Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure all staff are fully aware of the procedures and guidelines and how to implement them • Must ensure staff are fully supported when undertaking home visits
DoE Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure adherence to the State Public Service code of conduct (link: http://www.osscc.tas.gov.au/cd/05-2009.pdf) and other relevant professional codes of ethics • Must ensure familiarity with the procedures and guidelines in relation to home visits and visiting families away from departmental premises • Must obey any lawful direction given by their supervisor or any other person having authority to give that direction.

5. Risk Management

Prior to conducting any home visit, a management plan that includes a risk assessment must be prepared and approved by the principal or senior management and a copy filed. A [Risk Management Template](#) is available.

6. Associated Documents and Materials

The following documents can be found at education.tas.gov.au (Search for Doc ID)

These procedures must be read in conjunction with:

- Partnerships in Learning Policy Driver (Doc ID: TASED-4-1398)
- Home Visit Safety Checklist (below)
- Worker Safety Guidelines (Doc ID: TASED-4-1219)
- Support for Early Years Home Visits (Doc ID: TASED-4-1218)
- Risk Management Template (Doc ID: TASED-4-1781)

Home visit safety checklist

Do you feel comfortable making a home visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If no, have you spoken with your principal or senior manager?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you read the file history and obtained background and or relevant information from relevant staff?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the risk assessment and management plan been completed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you made contact with the family to advise them of the home visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you accessed a government plated car?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you have school or Department of Education ID?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is your mobile phone adequately charged and in working order with relevant phone numbers stored?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you advised relevant staff members of your home visit and informed them of where you are going and what time you are due back?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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